

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT
GROUP HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON
THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2008**

MEMBERS

* Cllr R Rowe - Chairman

* Cllr R J Carter - Vice-Chairman

* Cllr P Coulson

∅ Cllr G Date

∅ Cllr D W May

* Cllr S L Rankin

* Cllr R J Vint

* Cllr A Ward

* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apology for absence

Also in attendance and participating:
Cllrs Bastone, Carson and Steer

Officers in attendance:

All Agenda items: Strategic Director (Community), AONB Manager and AONB
Project Manager

EPDG.1/08 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment Policy Development Group (EPDG) held on 13 December 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

EPDG.2/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting. These were recorded as follows:-

Cllr Rowe declared a personal interest in item 5: 'Review of the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan' (minute EPDG.3/08 below refers) by virtue of her membership of the South Devon AONB Partnership Committee and remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and vote thereon.

EPDG.3/08 **REVIEW OF THE SOUTH DEVON AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Consideration was given to a report which provided Members with information on the review of the current South Devon AONB Management Plan. Officers informed Members that the AONB area was designated in 1960 and covered the South Hams Coastline, swept inland up the river Dart to Totnes and up to Avonwick, and also included parts of Torbay and Plymouth.

Members were also informed of a number of statutory duties such as all public bodies having regard for the AONB when undertaking their activities. Moreover, it was a statutory duty to review the AONB management plan every five years and Members were asked to bear in mind that the AONB management plan did not just belong to the South Hams but was to be published jointly with Torbay and Plymouth Unitary Authorities and Devon County Council.

Officers noted that discussions had been held with key stakeholders, the result of which was a list of issues that stakeholders felt were important and needed addressing within the AONB management plan. The Group was informed that the consultation period was until 10 September 2008 and upon the receipt of the consultation feedback the AONB management plan, strategy and delivery plan would be presented for formal adoption at the beginning of 2009.

During discussion, particular reference was made to:-

- i) a review of the AONB boundary. Officers informed the Group that the boundary had not been reviewed but such a review would be the decision of the Secretary of State having taken advice from Natural England. Natural England had stated that they did not currently have the resources to undertake a boundary review due to concentrating efforts on the creation of new National Parks;
- ii) links and overlap with Dartmoor National Park's management plan. In response, officers informed Members that there was no geographical overlap, with the AONB boundary stopping a kilometre short of the Dartmoor National Park Boundary;
- iii) whether any resources were shared with Dartmoor National Park. The Group was informed that a method of co-ordination was in place but there were currently no shared resources;
- iv) climate change. A Member expressed the view that the AONB area consisted of both coastal areas and river valleys both of which would be most affected by flooding as a result of climate change. Members highlighted that whilst climate change was noted as a cross cutting theme, it should be given a higher priority and cited at the start of the plan;

- v) government management of agricultural policies and whether the AONB management plan was to be used as a tool to feedback the effects of macro policies. In response, officers informed the Group that there were activities that would have an influence at a local level, for example, the AONB unit had been working with farmers and local agencies on practical projects to reduce pollution entering watercourses. However for more strategic issues, lobbying would be needed to influence policy;
- vi) environmental education. A Member queried if steps should be taken to raise the ecological awareness of young people. Members were informed that apart from Wembury Marine Centre, there was no formal work undertaken with young people, but the suggestion would be taken on board and progressed;
- vii) A Member's wish for a strong link to be made with the AONB management plan and other policies concerning local food production. It was noted that there were a number of campaign groups generating support for local food;
- viii) the breakdown of family farming and the resultant take over by large farming corporations or land becoming untended. Officers informed Members that there was currently a major change in land ownership and management, and that activities could be undertaken to support the new generation of land owners with the knowledge and skills required to effectively manage the land;
- ix) the Devon and Dorset Shoreline Management Plan. Members felt that it was important to demonstrate links with the Devon and Dorset Shoreline Management Plan, as the Plan would be establishing broad policies for the management of coastal change;
- x) the management of water abstraction. Members were informed that the Environment Agency was responsible for administering the licences for water abstraction and were required to manage river levels. Water abstraction was not referred to in the existing AONB management plan, but would be included in the new plan;
- xi) transport and road building. Members were informed that any road improvements were now more sensitively undertaken, with the Highways Authority sharing and demonstrating best practice. A Member expressed the view that the pressures on bus companies to provide bigger and wider vehicles may mean the vehicles become unsuitable for the roads.

The Group felt that there should be a policy statement concerning how to travel around the AONB area, encouraging more environmentally friendly vehicles and methods of travel;

- xii) renewable energy. Members felt that the AONB management plan needed to provide a clear statement on renewable energy. In response, officers informed Members that there was a perception that the AONB was about restricting development. Officers felt that the AONB management plan could be more positive towards certain types of renewable energy, whilst remaining wary of major industrial scale installations;
- xiii) links with the Local Area Agreement (LAA). Members were informed that the AONB would need to look at the broader targets of the LAA and determine how the AONB could contribute to these targets.

RECOMMENDED

That the Environment Policy Development Group have considered the South Devon AONB Management Plan review process (as recorded above) and recommend that the Executive:

1. note the progress to date and timetable to complete the review of the South Devon AONB Management Plan;
2. incorporate issues and significant matters affecting the District in the revised South Devon AONB Management Plan for the period 2009-14;
3. note the Council's Section 85 Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 "duty of regard" to conserve and enhance the AONB when exercising functions – particularly in relation to decision making and the management of its land estate.

(Meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.35 am).

Chairman